

CLAIMS

1. A process for the preparation of chocolate crumb which comprises mixing and heating milk solids, sugar, in the absence or presence of cocoa solids and from 1.2 to 8% by weight of water based on the weight of the mixture in a mixer to a temperature of 85° to 120°C, reacting at a temperature of 85° to 180°C for a period of from 2.5 to 25 minutes followed by drying to a moisture content of less than 3% by weight based on the total weight of the mixture.
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the milk solids comprise whole milk powder, whey proteins or low fat milk solids.
3. A process according to claim 2 wherein the low fat milk solids consists of skimmed milk powder, or ingredients thereof or recombined dairy solids.
4. A process according to claim 1 wherein the amount of milk solids is from 20 to 70% by weight based on the total weight of the mixture.
5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the sugar used is in the form of a dry powder or a slurry.
6. A process according to claim 1 wherein the sugar used is sucrose, glucose, dextrose, lactose, fructose, invert sugar, corn syrup solids, solids or sugar replacers or mixtures thereof.
7. A process according to claim 6 wherein the sugar replacer is sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, lactitol or polydextrose.
8. A process according to claim 1 wherein the the ratio of milk solids to sugar is from 1:3 to 1:1.5.
9. A process according to claim 1 wherein the ratio of milk solids to sugar is between 1:1.5 and 1: 0.1.
10. A process according to claim 1 wherein when the process is carried out in the presence of cocoa solids, the solids are in the form of cocoa liquor, cocoa powder, cocoa butter equivalents (CBE) or cocoa butter substitutes (CBS).

11. A process according to claim 1 wherein the amount of cocoa solids used in the process of the present invention is from 3 to 20% by weight based on the total weight of the mixture.

12. A chocolate crumb comprising low fat milk solids, sugar and from 3 to 20% by weight of cocoa butter alternatives based on the total weight of the crumb.

13. A chocolate crumb comprising low fat milk solids, sugar, cocoa solids and cocoa butter alternatives.

14. A chocolate crumb obtainable by a process according to claim 1 which contains sugar replacers, carob or soya protein isolate.

15. A concentrated chocolate crumb comprising low fat milk solids, sugar and optionally cocoa solids wherein the ratio of milk solids to sugar is between 1:1.5 and 1:0.1.

16. A concentrated chocolate crumb according to claim 12 wherein the amount of cocoa solids in the concentrated chocolate crumb is from 10 to 15% by weight based on the total weight of the mixture.

17. A method of making a milk chocolate which comprises mixing a chocolate crumb prepared by a process of the present invention with the remainder of the chocolate ingredients (cocoa liquor, cocoa butter and butter oil) and processing into milk chocolate.

18. A method according to claim 17 wherein the chocolate crumb is mixed with the remainder of the chocolate ingredients and the mixture is then refined by means of refining rollers, conched and then tempered.

19. Milk chocolate whenever prepared from a chocolate crumb according to claim 1 together with other chocolate ingredients.